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INGLIZ VA QORAQALPOQ RAQAMLI DISKURSIDA EMOJILARNING LINGVOMADANIY MARKER SIFATIDAGI XUSUSIYATLARI

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Annotatsiya

Maqolada emodjilar ingliz va qoraqalpoq raqamli diskursida lingvomadaniy marker sifatida tahlil qilinadi. Ijtimoiy tarmoqlardan olingan materiallar asosida ikki til jamoasida emodjilardan foydalanish xususiyatlari aniqlangan. Tadqiqot natijalari emodjilar tanlovi va ularning kommunikativ vazifalariga madaniy qadriyatlarining ta'sirini ko'rsatadi.

Kalit so'zlar: emodji, raqamli diskurs, lingvomadaniyatshunoslik, noverbal kommunikatsiya, ingliz tili, qoraqalpoq tili, ijtimoiy tarmoqlardagi muloqot, madaniyatlararo kommunikatsiya, kompyuter vositasida amalga oshiriladigan kommunikatsiya, raqamli lingvistika.

ЭМОДЗИ КАК ЛИНГВОКУЛЬТУРНЫЕ МАРКЕРЫ В АНГЛИЙСКОМ И КАРАКАЛПАКСКОМ ЦИФРОВОМ ДИСКУРСЕ

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Аннотация

В статье рассматриваются эмодзи как лингвокультурные маркеры в английском и каракалпакском цифровом дискурсе. На основе анализа материалов из социальных сетей выявлены особенности использования эмодзи в двух языковых сообществах. Результаты показывают влияние культурных ценностей на выбор и коммуникативные функции эмодзи в цифровом общении.

Ключевые слова: эмодзи, цифровой дискурс, лингвокультурология, невербальная коммуникация, английский язык, каракалпакский язык, коммуникация в социальных сетях, межкультурная коммуникация, компьютерно-опосредованная коммуникация, цифровая лингвистика.

EMOJIS AS LINGUOCULTURAL MARKERS IN ENGLISH AND KARAKALPAK DIGITAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract

The article examines emojis as linguocultural markers in English and Karakalpak digital discourse. Based on social media data, the study identifies similarities and differences in emoji use across the two linguistic communities. The findings demonstrate that cultural values significantly influence emoji choice and communicative functions in digital interaction.

Keywords: emoji, digital discourse, linguocultural studies, nonverbal communication, English language, Karakalpak language, social media communication, intercultural communication, computer-mediated communication, digital linguistics.

The digitalization of communication has significantly transformed the ways individuals create, interpret, and exchange meanings in contemporary society. The emergence of social networking platforms, instant messaging applications, and online communities has generated new forms of interaction characterized by multimodality, interactivity, and the integration of verbal and nonverbal resources. Within these environments, emojis have become one of the most recognizable and widely used elements of digital communication.

Unlike traditional written language, digital discourse often lacks facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and prosodic cues that accompany face-to-face interaction. To compensate for the absence of these nonverbal elements, users increasingly rely on visual signs such as emojis, GIFs, stickers, and other graphic symbols. Among these resources, emojis occupy a unique position due to their universality, accessibility, and communicative flexibility [5].

Researchers have demonstrated that emojis perform multiple communicative functions [6]. They may express emotions, clarify intentions, reduce ambiguity, establish interpersonal rapport, strengthen

social bonds, and influence message interpretation. Furthermore, emojis often function as pragmatic markers that help users negotiate social relationships and manage interpersonal interaction in computer-mediated communication [11].

The increasing scholarly interest in emojis has contributed to the development of digital linguistics and multimodal discourse studies. Recent investigations have explored emoji semantics, pragmatics, sociolinguistic variation, emotional functions, and cultural interpretation. Bai et al., in their systematic review of emoji research, argue that emojis represent a complex semiotic system whose meanings depend on contextual, cultural, and social factors [1]. Similarly, Kaye, Malone, and Wall emphasize that emojis should be understood as socially embedded communicative resources rather than simple emotional indicators [8].

Recent studies have also investigated the relationship between emoji use, emotional processing, personality traits, and online self-presentation. Research demonstrates that emojis influence emotional interpretation and social perception in digital environments [2, 9]. Furthermore, emoji comprehension may vary depending on age, gender, and cultural background [3].

From a linguocultural perspective, emojis provide valuable insights into cultural patterns of communication. Although many emojis are globally recognized, their meanings and functions are not universally interpreted. Cultural norms influence how users express emotions, demonstrate politeness, construct identities, and maintain interpersonal relationships in digital environments [13]. Consequently, identical emojis may perform different communicative functions across linguistic communities.

Particular attention has recently been devoted to the study of emojis in English-language digital discourse, where they frequently serve as markers of emotional expressiveness, humor, irony, and identity construction [10]. However, considerably less attention has been paid to emoji usage in the digital communication of smaller linguistic communities, including those of Central Asia. In particular, the role of emojis in Karakalpak digital discourse remains virtually unexplored despite the growing popularity of social media platforms among Karakalpak-speaking users.

The Karakalpak linguistic community presents an especially interesting case for linguocultural investigation. As a society characterized by strong traditions of collectivism, respect for social hierarchy, and culturally embedded forms of politeness, Karakalpak communication practices may influence the ways emojis are employed in online interaction. Therefore, examining emoji usage in Karakalpak digital discourse provides an opportunity to identify culturally specific communicative patterns that may differ from those observed in English-language online environments.

The scientific novelty of the present study lies in its comparative analysis of emoji usage in English and Karakalpak digital discourse. While previous studies have investigated emojis in various linguistic and cultural contexts, comparative research involving the Karakalpak language remains extremely limited. The study therefore contributes to filling an important gap in contemporary linguocultural and digital discourse research.

The object of the research is digital communication in English and Karakalpak social media discourse.

The subject of the research is the linguocultural functions of emojis as nonverbal markers in online communication.

The aim of the study is to identify and compare the communicative and linguocultural functions of emojis in English and Karakalpak digital discourse.

To achieve this aim, the following research objectives were formulated:

1. To examine the theoretical foundations of emoji usage in digital communication;
2. To identify the communicative functions of emojis in English-language social media discourse;
3. To analyze the linguocultural characteristics of emoji usage in Karakalpak digital discourse;
4. To compare similarities and differences in emoji usage across the two linguistic communities;
5. To determine the role of emojis as markers of cultural values and communication norms in digital interaction.

The study is based on the assumption that although emojis function as universal elements of digital communication, their communicative meanings and pragmatic functions are shaped by the linguocultural characteristics of particular speech communities.

To the best of the author's knowledge, this study represents one of the first attempts to compare emoji usage in English and Karakalpak digital discourse from a linguocultural perspective.

Materials and Methods

The research material was collected from publicly available social media platforms widely used

by English-speaking and Karakalpak-speaking users, including Instagram, Telegram, Facebook, and X (formerly Twitter). These platforms were selected due to their high level of user interaction and frequent use of emojis as part of everyday digital communication.

The study is based on approximately 120 examples of emoji usage extracted from publicly available posts, comments, and online interactions. The dataset included 60 examples from English-language digital discourse and 60 examples from Karakalpak-language digital discourse. The selected examples represented naturally occurring communication and were chosen through purposive sampling. Particular attention was given to comments containing emotionally expressive, culturally significant, or interactionally meaningful emoji usage.

The study employed a comparative linguocultural approach combined with discourse analysis and elements of quantitative content analysis. The analysis was conducted in three stages.

At the first stage, all collected examples were classified according to the communicative function of the emojis used. Five major functional categories were identified:

1. Emotional expression;
2. Humor and irony;
3. Social support and solidarity;
4. Group identity and affiliation;
5. Cultural and religious meanings.

At the second stage, the frequency of each category was calculated within both the English and Karakalpak datasets.

At the third stage, similarities and differences in emoji usage were interpreted from a linguocultural perspective, taking into account communication norms, cultural values, and patterns of social interaction characteristic of the two linguistic communities.

To ensure ethical compliance, only publicly accessible content was analyzed. Usernames and personal information were removed or anonymized.

Results and Discussion

Distribution of Emoji Functions in the Collected Corpus

The quantitative analysis revealed notable differences in the communicative functions of emojis across the two linguistic communities.

Table 1. Communicative Functions of Emojis in English and Karakalpak Digital Discourse

Function	English (n=60)	Karakalpak (n=60)
Emotional expression	19	17
Humor and irony	17	5
Social support and solidarity	10	19
Group identity and affiliation	9	7
Cultural and religious meanings	5	12

Source: Author's compilation based on the collected data.

The percentages were calculated based on the total number of examples identified within each corpus (n = 60).

The results demonstrate that emotional expression represents the most common function of emojis in both linguistic communities. However, the distribution of other functions varies considerably.

The English-language corpus shows a considerably higher proportion of humor- and irony-related emoji usage (29%) compared to the Karakalpak dataset (8%). Conversely, Karakalpak users employ emojis more frequently for expressing social support, solidarity, and culturally embedded meanings.

These findings indicate that while emojis function as universal communicative resources, their pragmatic realization is shaped by specific cultural norms and communicative traditions.

Emojis as Markers of Emotional Expression

The analysis of English-language comments shows that emojis frequently accompany emotionally charged utterances and, in some cases, replace explicit verbal descriptions of feelings. For example, in the comment *‘‘I donate what doesn’t fit me, so I’m safe 😂😂😂,’’* the repeated laughing emojis indicate that the speaker presents the situation humorously rather than seriously. The emojis soften the statement and transform it into a playful form of self-irony. Similarly, in the comment *‘‘That bag would have sat in my trunk for three months 😂😭,’’* the combination of laughing and crying emojis intensifies

the comic effect and conveys embarrassment, self-recognition, and amusement at the same time. In both cases, emojis do not merely decorate the text; they function as emotional markers that guide the reader's interpretation of the comment.

These examples confirm that emojis operate as paralinguistic devices in digital discourse, compensating for the absence of facial expressions, gestures, intonation, and other non-verbal cues in online communication [6]. They also support previous findings that emojis help users interpret emotional meanings and shape the perception of interpersonal messages in computer-mediated communication [2]. In the analysed English comments, laughing, crying, smiling, and heart emojis are especially common in contexts where users express humour, irony, empathy, agreement, or emotional involvement.

In the Karakalpak corpus, emotional expression through emojis is also widely observed, but it is more often connected with positive interpersonal relations and socially approved communicative practices. For instance, comments such as **"Raxmet sizge 😊🙏"** show that the smiling face and folded hands emojis reinforce gratitude and politeness. In congratulatory messages such as **"Qutli bolsin 🎉👏"**, the celebration and clapping emojis visually strengthen the positive emotional tone of the utterance. Similarly, expressions like **"Bereke tapsin ❤️"** demonstrate how emojis may intensify blessings, goodwill, and sincere wishes. Thus, while English-language comments often use emojis to express humour, irony, or self-deprecating emotion, Karakalpak comments tend to employ them as markers of respect, warmth, gratitude, blessing, and social solidarity.

Humor and Irony in English Digital Discourse

One of the most prominent features of the English-language dataset is the use of emojis to construct humor, irony, and playful self-presentation. In many comments, laughing and crying emojis accompany exaggerated statements and help the reader interpret them as humorous rather than literal. For example, comments such as **"I can't believe this is me 😂😂😂"**, **"NOOOO, why is this so accurate 😂😂"**, and **"This is my villain origin story 😏"** demonstrate how emojis intensify comic meaning and signal ironic distance from the situation being described.

Multiple identical emojis are especially frequent in humorous contexts. Repetition, as in **"😂😂😂"** or **"😂😂😂"**, increases the emotional intensity of the utterance and creates the effect of exaggerated reaction. In addition, textual features such as capitalization, repeated letters, and colloquial expressions often work together with emojis. For instance, in **"I CAN'TTT 😂😂"**, the capital letters, extended consonants, and mixed laughing-crying emojis jointly produce a humorous and emotionally expressive tone.

The frequent combination of textual exaggeration, repeated letters, capitalization, and emoji repetition suggests that English-language users employ emojis not only as emotional indicators but also as resources for individual self-expression and creative identity construction. Similar tendencies have been reported in studies of English-language online communication [10].

Social Support and Collective Values in Karakalpak Digital Discourse

Unlike the English corpus, where emojis are often associated with humor, irony, and self-expressive performance, Karakalpak digital communication demonstrates a stronger orientation toward social support, respect, and collective values. In the analysed comments, emojis frequently accompany wishes for happiness, health, prosperity, and success. For example, expressions such as **"Qutli bolsin 🎉👏"**, **"Baxtli bolin ❤️"** and **"Bereke tapsin ❤️"** show that emojis reinforce positive interpersonal meanings and make the message emotionally warmer.

In such examples, emojis do not merely repeat the verbal content of the message. Rather, they strengthen its pragmatic force. The folded hands emoji adds a sense of blessing and goodwill, the heart emoji **❤️** marks sincerity and warmth, while celebration and clapping emojis **🎉👏** visually intensify congratulatory meanings. These examples suggest that in Karakalpak digital discourse emojis function not only as emotional markers but also as tools for maintaining social harmony and expressing communal solidarity.

The prevalence of these communicative patterns may be explained by the culturally significant role of interpersonal support, respect, and collective belonging in Karakalpak everyday communication. Therefore, emojis in this corpus often serve to strengthen social bonds and to present the speaker as polite, supportive, and emotionally involved.

The analysis also revealed culturally specific emoji functions in Karakalpak digital discourse. A number of comments contain religious expressions, blessings, and wishes accompanied by emojis

associated with sincerity, gratitude, and goodwill. For example, comments such as *‘‘Allam panasında bolıń’’*, *‘‘Alla razı bolsın 🙏’’*, *‘‘Duası qabıl bolsın ❤️’’*, and *‘‘Raxmet, saw bolıń 😊🙏’’* demonstrate how emojis visually reinforce religiously and culturally marked meanings.

In these contexts, emojis acquire additional pragmatic and linguocultural functions. The folded hands emoji may be interpreted not only as a general sign of gratitude or request but also as a visual marker of prayer, blessing, and spiritual goodwill. Similarly, the heart emoji *❤️* strengthens the sincerity of the message, while the smiling face *😊* softens the utterance and adds politeness.

These findings indicate that emojis may gain culturally specific meanings when embedded within local communicative practices. In Karakalpak digital discourse, they function as linguocultural markers reflecting shared values, religious associations, emotional sincerity, and collective cultural knowledge.

Comparative Discussion

The findings of the present study suggest that emoji usage in digital communication cannot be regarded as a purely universal phenomenon. Although users in both linguistic communities employ similar visual symbols, the communicative functions and contextual meanings attached to these symbols differ significantly.

One of the most notable differences concerns the relationship between emoji use and cultural values. The English-language corpus demonstrates a tendency toward individualization and self-expression. Emojis frequently accompany humorous remarks, ironic observations, and emotionally exaggerated statements. In such contexts, visual symbols contribute to the construction of personal identity and help users express individuality in online interaction. This observation supports McCulloch’s argument that contemporary digital communication increasingly reflects personalized styles of language use [10].

By contrast, the Karakalpak corpus reveals a stronger connection between emoji usage and collective cultural values. Emojis frequently occur in messages expressing congratulations, blessings, gratitude, and wishes for well-being. Rather than emphasizing personal emotional experiences, many comments focus on strengthening social relationships and demonstrating respect toward other members of the community.

Another important difference concerns the pragmatic role of emojis. In English-language communication, emojis often function as markers of informality and humor. They may soften criticism, signal irony, or enhance playful interaction. In the Karakalpak corpus, however, emojis are more commonly associated with positive politeness strategies. They reinforce expressions of support, approval, and solidarity, thereby contributing to the maintenance of harmonious interpersonal relations.

The analysis also highlights differences in the use of culturally specific meanings. Religious and blessing-related expressions were observed almost exclusively in the Karakalpak dataset. Such examples demonstrate that emojis may acquire additional semantic and pragmatic functions when combined with culturally significant linguistic expressions. Consequently, the interpretation of emojis depends not only on the visual symbol itself but also on the broader sociocultural context in which it appears. Similar conclusions have been reported by Chen et al., who found that demographic and cultural factors significantly influence emoji interpretation and comprehension [3].

These findings support the view that emojis should be regarded as linguocultural markers rather than merely graphic elements of digital communication. Their communicative value is shaped by cultural traditions, social expectations, and established norms of interaction within particular speech communities.

From a broader perspective, the results contribute to current discussions in digital linguistics concerning the relationship between globalization and cultural specificity. While digital communication technologies promote the global circulation of visual symbols, local cultures continue to influence the ways these symbols are interpreted and used in everyday communication.

Thus, the study demonstrates that emoji usage reflects not only universal emotional needs but also culturally conditioned patterns of communication. This finding is particularly important for understanding intercultural interaction in digital environments and for further research on the relationship between language, culture, and technology.

Conclusion

The present study examined emojis as linguocultural markers in English and Karakalpak digital discourse. The analysis demonstrated that emojis perform a wide range of communicative functions extending beyond the simple expression of emotions.

The findings revealed both universal and culture-specific patterns of emoji usage. In both linguistic communities, emojis serve as important tools of emotional expression and interpersonal

interaction. However, significant differences were identified in their communicative functions and pragmatic roles.

English-language users predominantly employ emojis to express humor, irony, emotional intensification, and individual identity. In contrast, Karakalpak-language users more frequently utilize emojis to express support, respect, blessings, and culturally significant values associated with social solidarity and collective identity.

The research confirms that emojis function as linguocultural markers reflecting communication norms, cultural values, and socially accepted patterns of interaction. Their meanings are not fixed but emerge through the interaction of visual symbols, linguistic context, and cultural background.

The scientific contribution of this study lies in providing one of the first comparative analyses of emoji usage in English and Karakalpak digital discourse. The results contribute to the development of digital linguistics, intercultural communication studies, and linguocultural research.

Future studies may expand the corpus of data, include additional social media platforms, and investigate gender-specific and age-related variations in emoji usage across different linguistic communities.

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